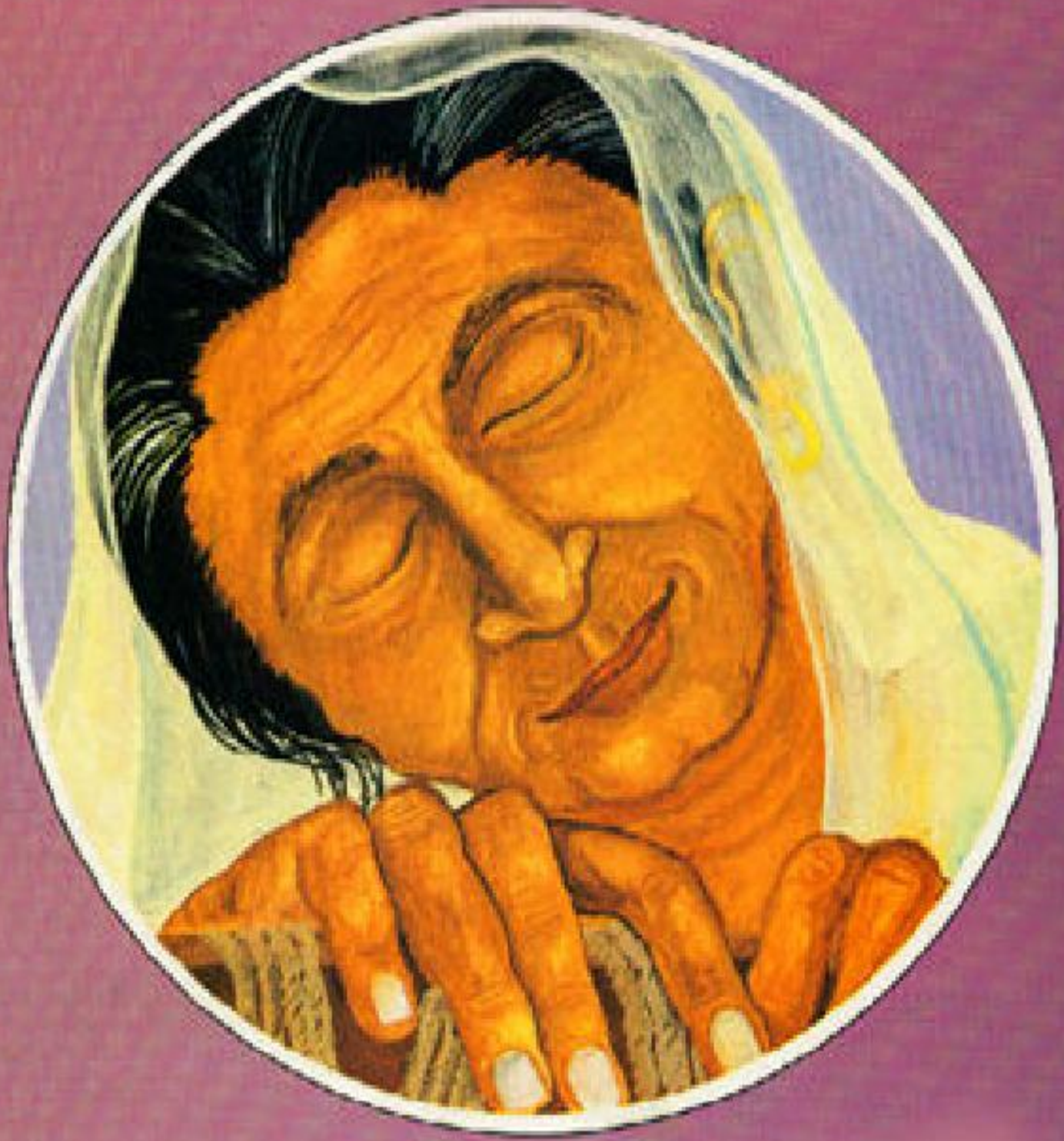
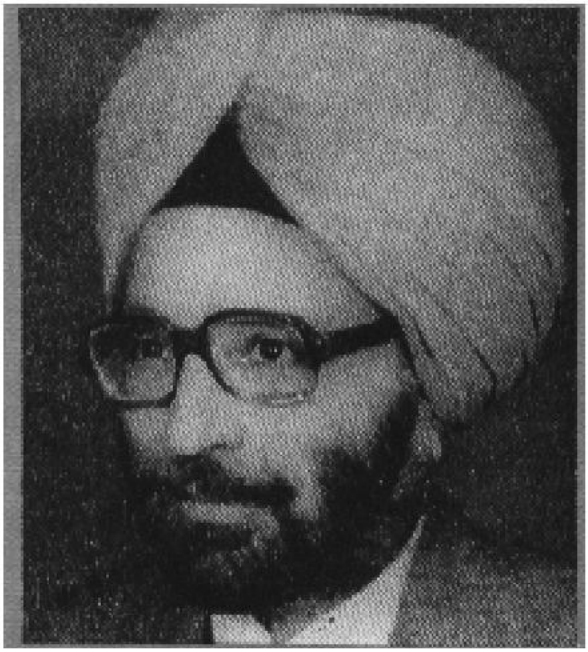
FATIGUE



Pictures: Taposhi Ghoshal

Gurbachan Singh Bhullar

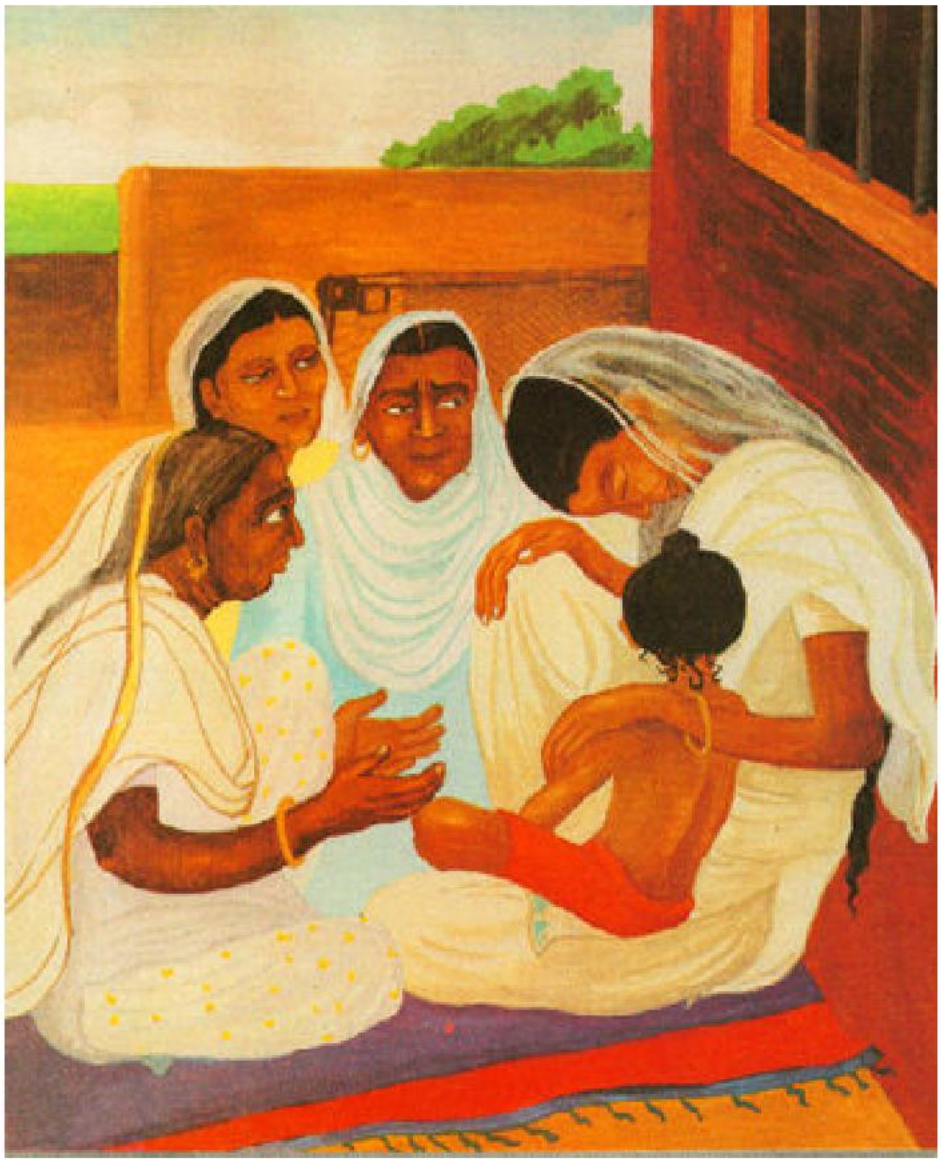


Gurbachan Singh Bhullar

Gurbachan Singh Bhullar (born 1937) spent his childhood in the Bathinda district of Punjab He spent his childhood in Punjabi literature. His interest in Punjabi literature grew because of his father, would read something to his children every day.

At the young age of twenty, Bhullar began writing poems, short stories, and children's stories. Through his writing, he combats social problems and evils—especially society's harsh treatment of women, the life-giving and nurturing force! The image of his simple mother always inspired him to write.

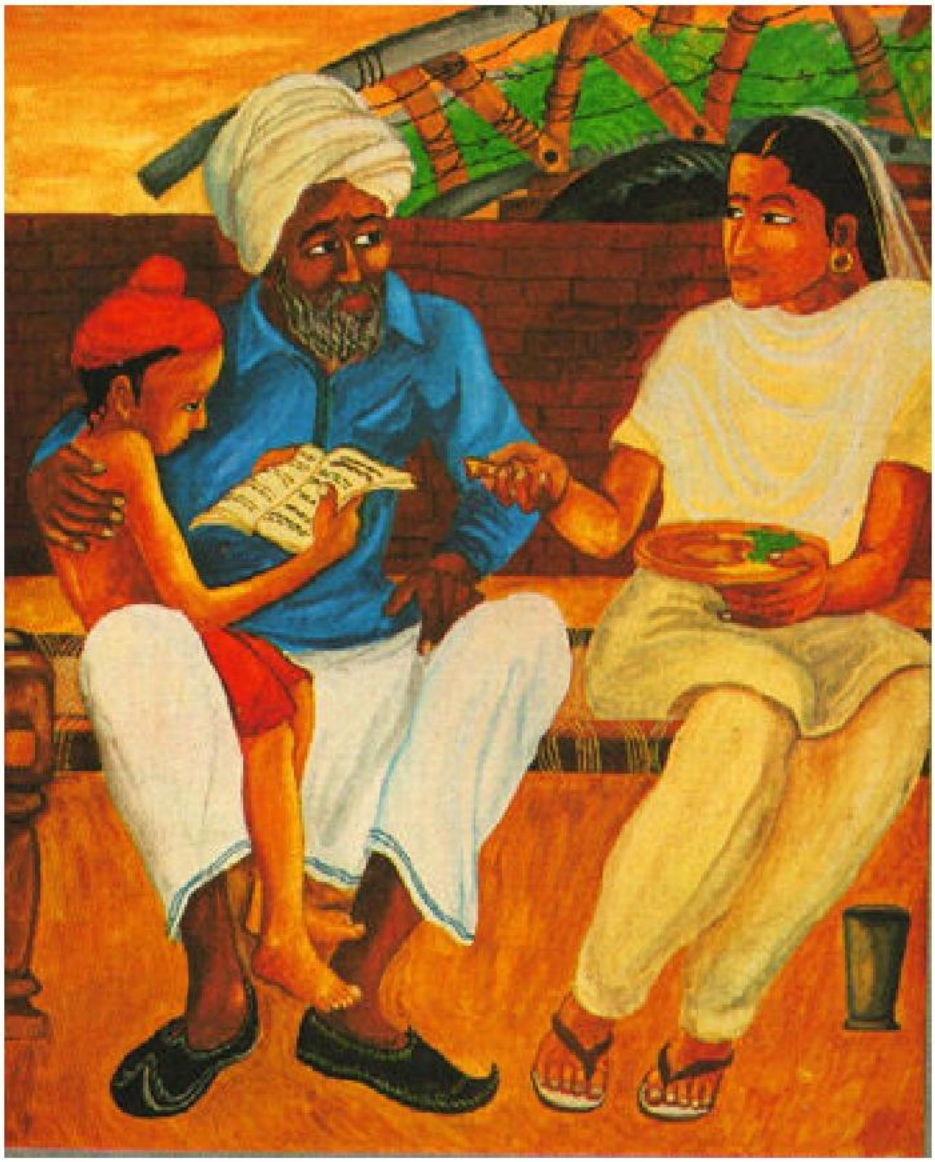
Aso the main character of *Fatigue* is such a simple yet fearless and self-confident woman.



Aso was not even thirty years old yet.

Her husband, Sucha Singh, died. The whole village was saddened by her widowhood.

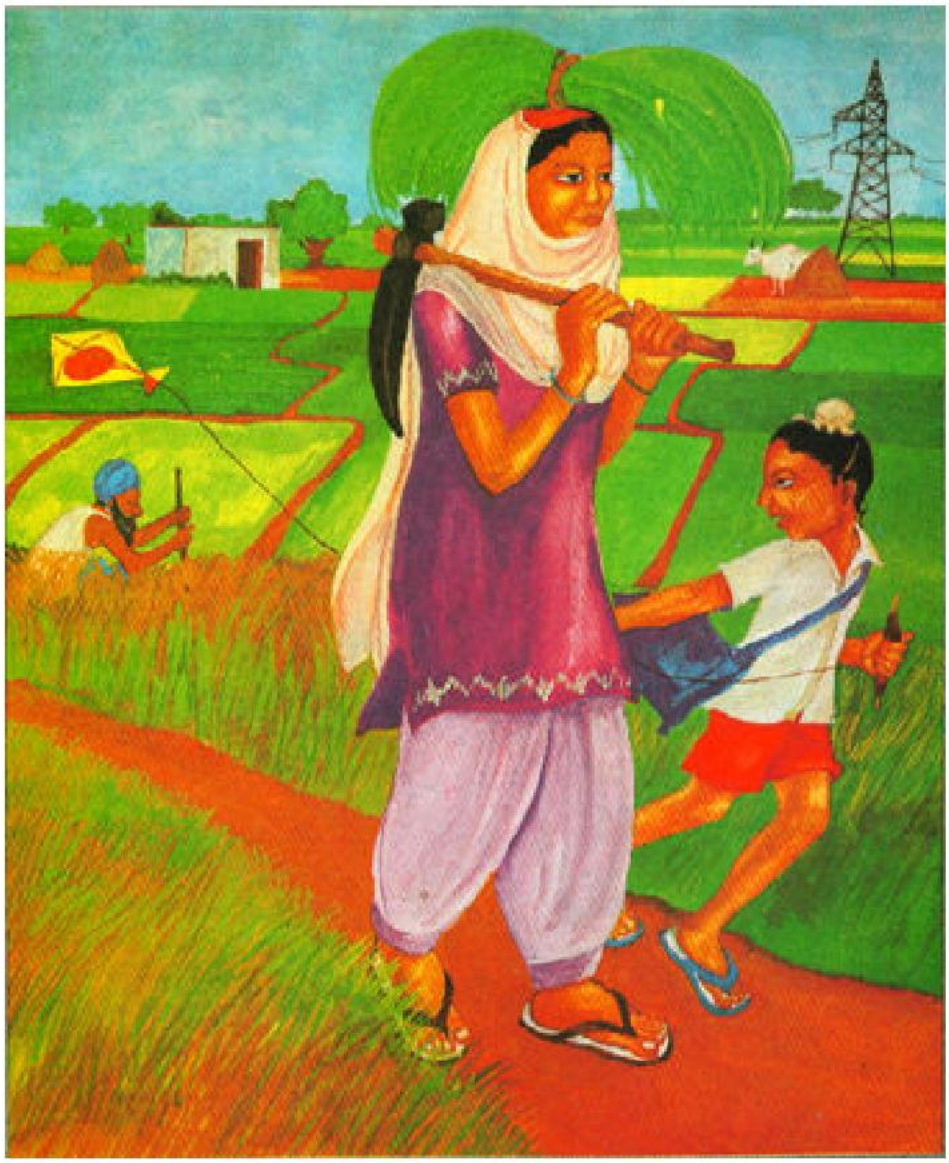
Her son, Gurdev, was only seven or eight years old. Darkness fell all around Aso.



Aso's brother Jaggar Singh moved in with her, but later he had to return to his village.

He advised Aso, “Sell your farming equipment and lease out your land.”

Then one day, while feeding Gurdev, Aso thought, "Gurdev will grow up soon. Then he will do all the farming himself. At that time I will have to gather all the things again."

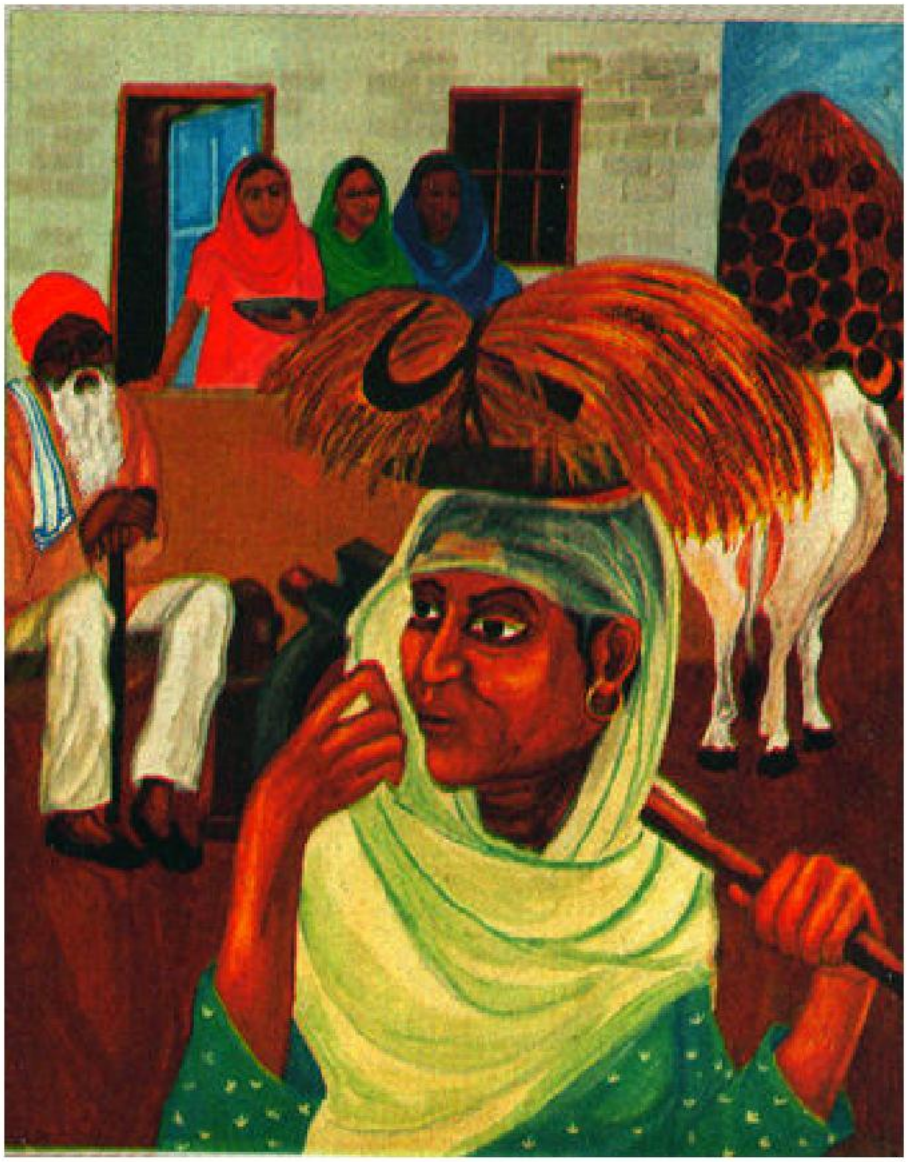


So she decided that she would do farming herself.

Aso told Jaggar Singh her decision, and her brother agreed with her.

Now Aso does all the farming work herself. She gave Gurdev, the love of both a mother and father.

Aso also played the role of Sucha Singh. She would miss him terribly. Often she became sad. But seeing Gurdev grow up, her pain subsided and a new enthusiasm filled her heart.



In a few years Gurdev grew up. Then the village elder told Aso, “Daughter! You I've suffered a lot. The boy has grown up. Now you can relieve yourself of your fatigue."

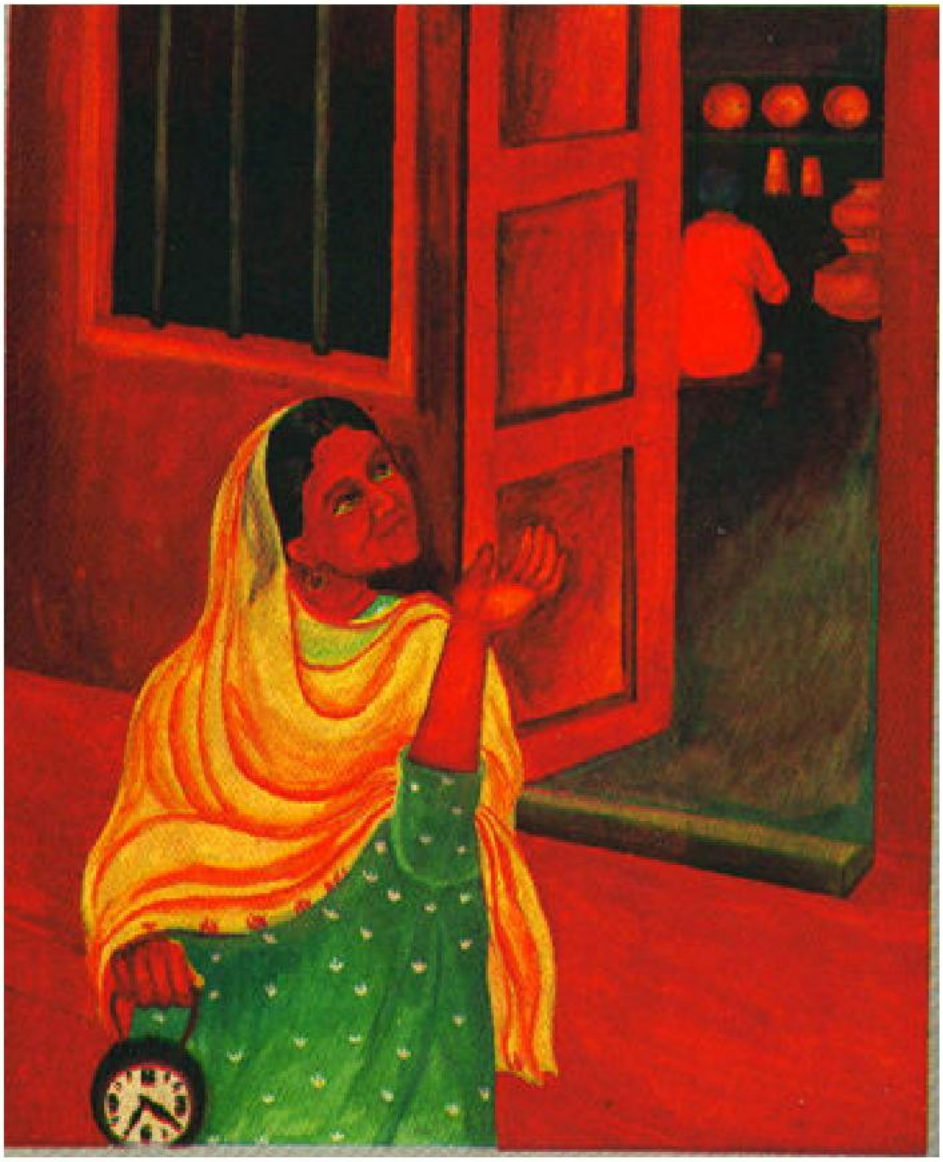
Aso replied from behind her veil, "Babaji, let your hand remain on my head. With your blessings there will be no problem."

One woman said, "Hey Aso? You must be tired from working. Now you should rest. Leave the men's work to the men."

Aso would avoid her question, "Sister, how can one become tired of work?"

Everyone offered similar advice. But Aso never felt tired. To Aso, Gurdev was still a child. She understood that Gurdev was still in the prime of life. It would be difficult for him to walk alone on this difficult path.

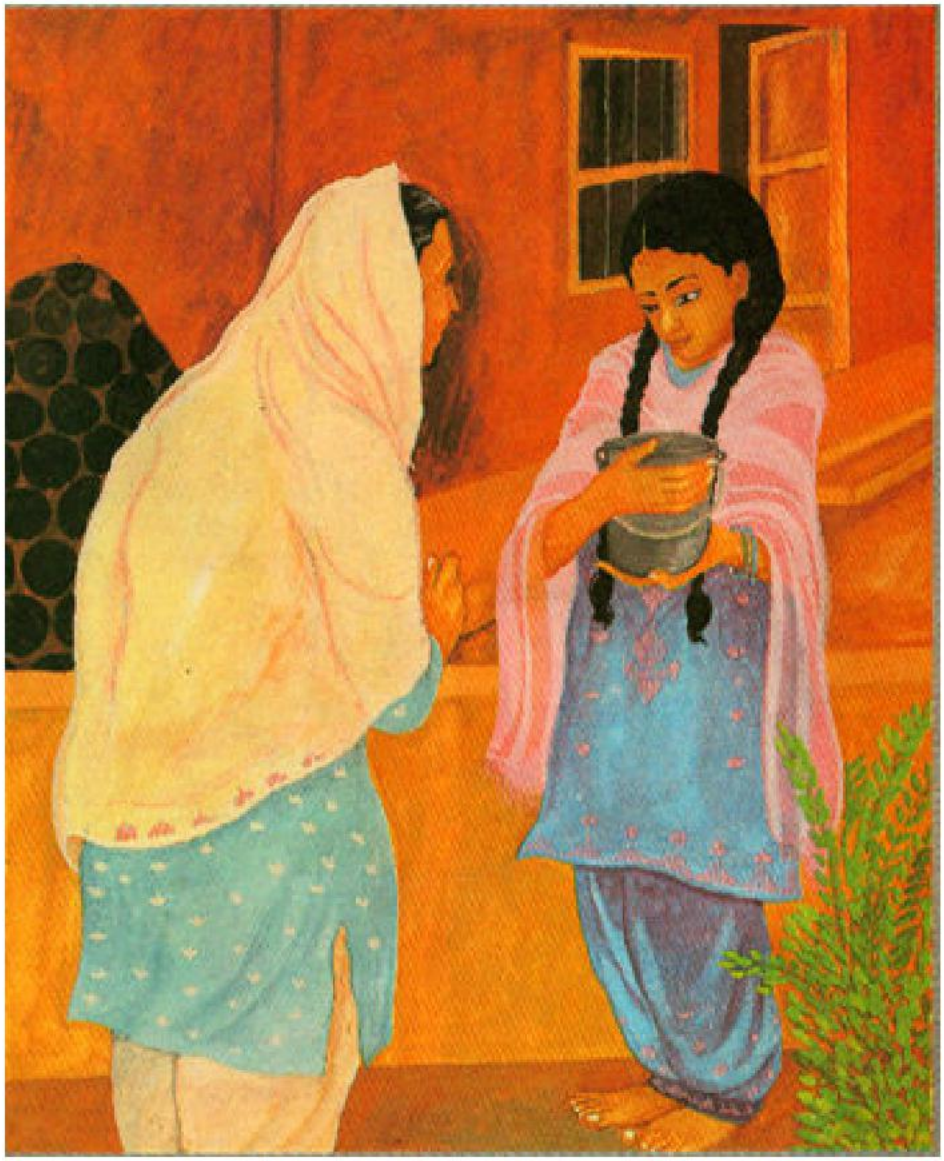
Today Aso had to get water for the fields. Gurdev told her to rest and said he would do the watering alone.



Aso laughed and said, “Look you are too young to even clean your nose. How will you water the fields all alone?"

Gurdev advised, "Okay, Mom, my friend Mohan is at home today. I'll take him to help."

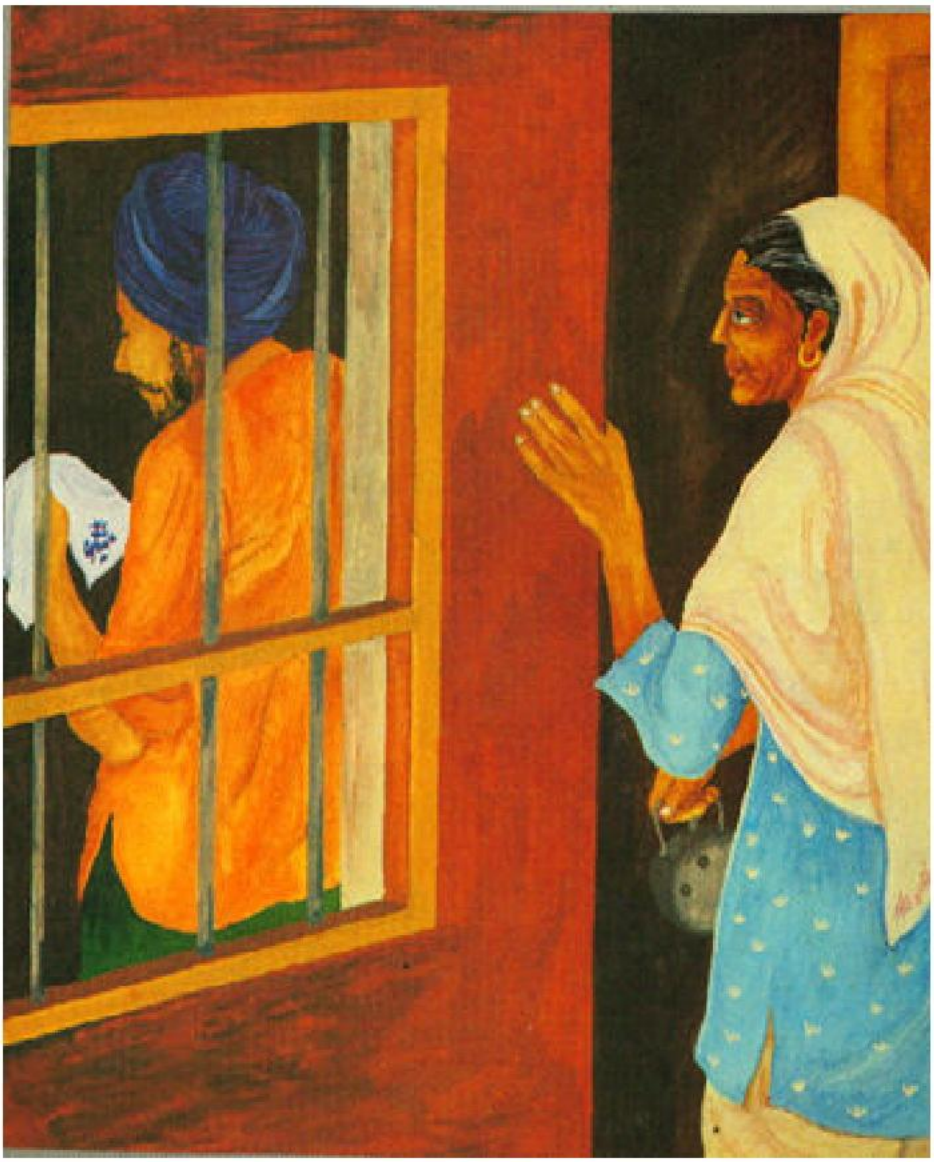
But Aso said, "No, no. Why should anyone help us? We'll water the fields ourselves." She asked Gurdev to do some small errands. Then she picked up her clock and went to check the time with Meerab.



When Aso returned after adjusting her clock, she saw the neighbor's daughter, Bhuro, leaving their house with a jug of lassi.

Bhuro was startled to see Aso. But she composed herself and said, “Auntie, I came to get lassi. Where had you gone?”

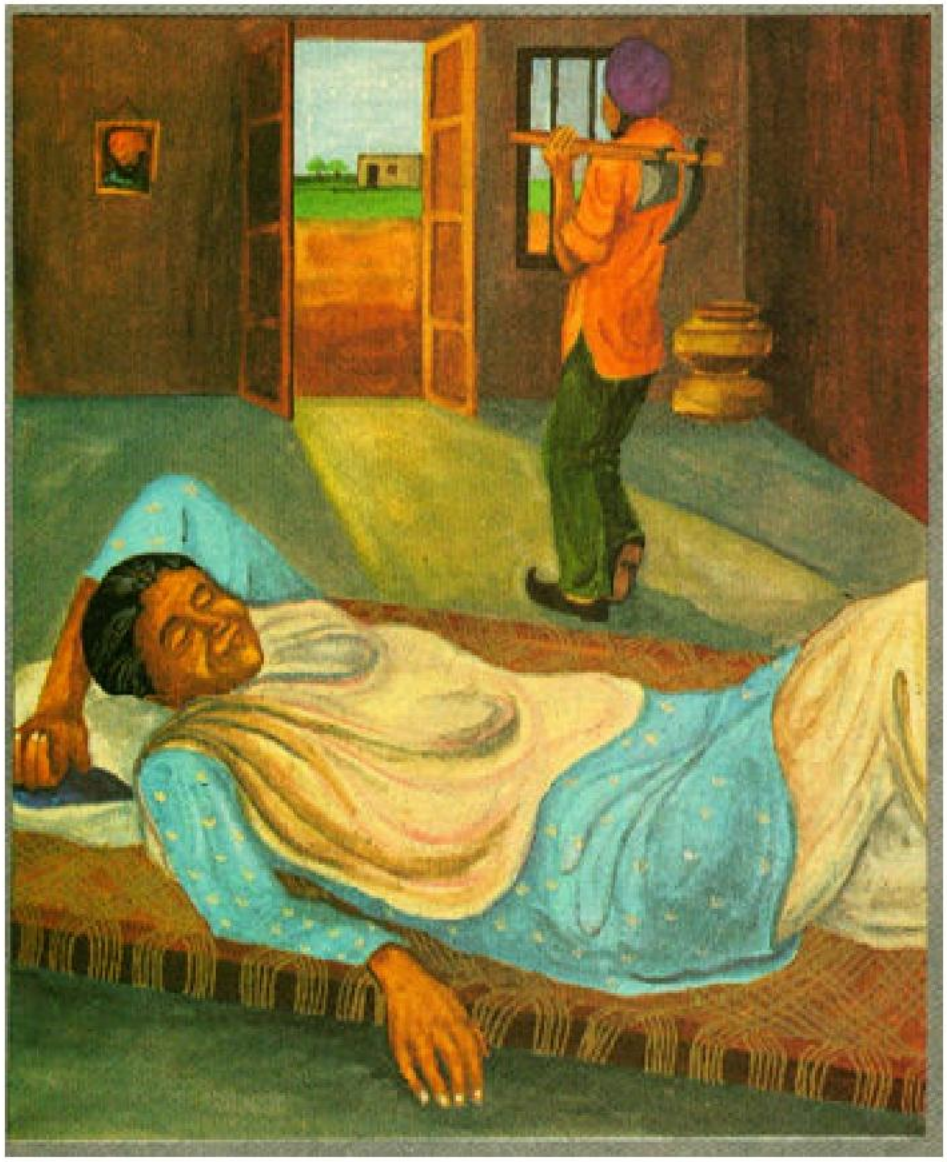
Aso replied, "I’d gone to tune the clock. We need to water the fields today."



Aso wondered why Bhuro got scared after seeing him?

While entering the house, Aso saw Gurdev through the window, holding a newly embroidered handkerchief.

When Aso coughed, Gurdev was startled and he hid the handkerchief in his pocket. He said, “Come on, Mom, let's go. We might be late.”



Then Aso understood everything. Her son was now a young man.

Aso said to her son, "Son, from now on you take care of the farm." Then she lay down on the cot. She felt as if she had been crushed by years of fatigue—the sweet exhaustion of reaching her destination!